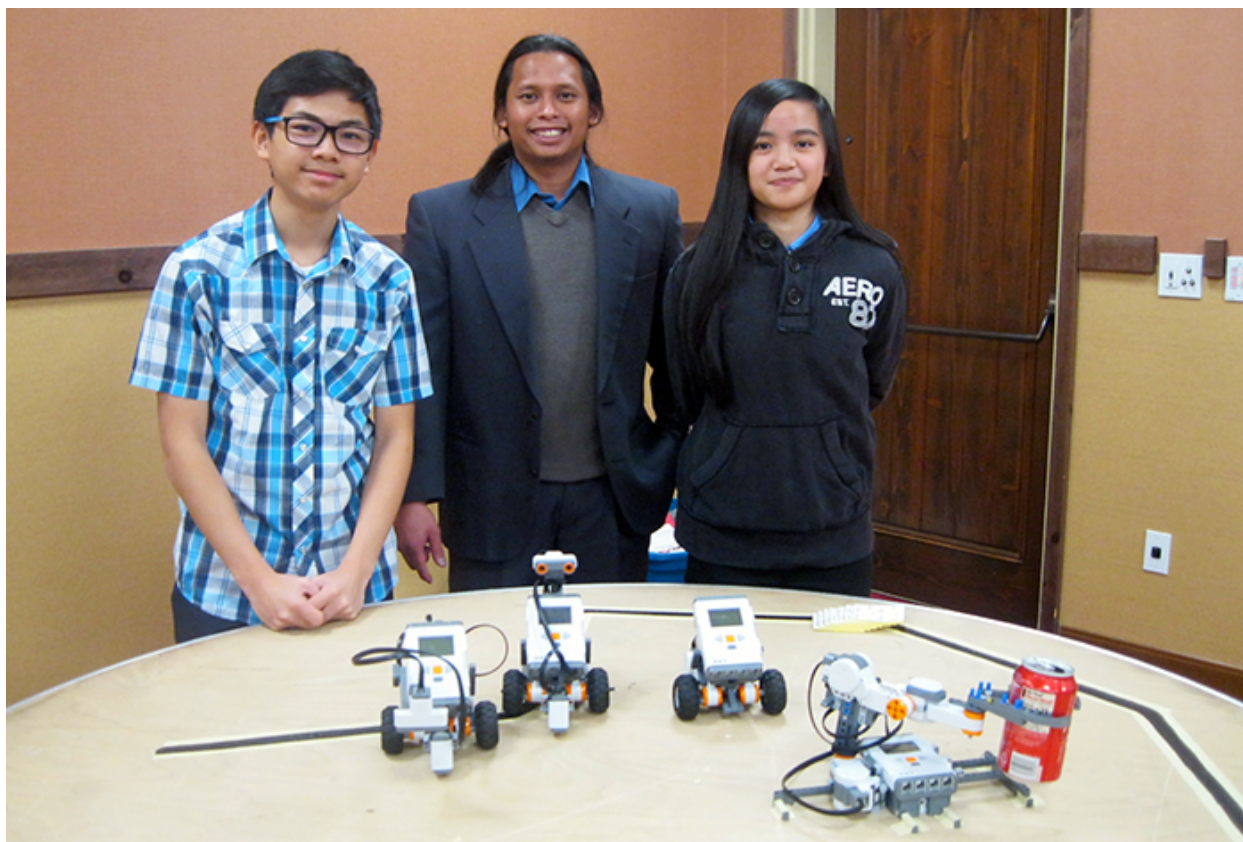


Getting ready for the Northern New Mexico RoboRAVE on March 7

March 1, 2015



A team of behind-the-scene elves has been getting ready for the Second Annual Northern New Mexico RoboRAVE Rally in Española for a year. As the March 7, 2015, competition draws near, the pace of the preparations intensifies, including for the free-of-charge robotics and programming workshops that regional RoboRAVE facilitator Ian Cainglet provides to teachers, parents and student participants.

Cainglet, an Española Valley High School pre-algebra instructor originally from the Philippines, has been on the road practically every weekend since September to teach robotics and programming basics to new RoboRAVE teams and provide refreshers to previous participants.

"If a workshop visit requires driving a long distance," Cainglet said, "I prefer to teach six hours in a single day. But if the school is fairly close, then we can schedule two days at three hours each or three days for two hours. Six hours sounds like a lot, or even two or

three, but especially the students are so excited and engaged that they don't really want to stop."

Cainglet, who has a degree in electronics engineering in addition to his teaching credentials, enjoys teaching the necessary skills, and he also appreciates the camaraderie and sense of community that the RoboRAVE workshops and events generate.

"Last year was my first visit to Peñasco," Cainglet explained, "and I thought that maybe a few people would show up. But when I stepped into La Jicarita Charter School I not only was met by a very large crowd but a crowd that had brought all kinds of delicious food to share. When I met everyone again at the 2014 RoboRAVE, it was like seeing old friends."

In addition to helping students from across northern New Mexico get ready for the RoboRAVE rally, Cainglet also coaches his own teams. He will have two middle school teams from Carlos Vigil Middle School in Española and two high school teams from Española Valley High School compete this year.

"I only entered one team last year for the first Northern New Mexico RoboRAVE and the International RoboRAVE Rally in Albuquerque," Cainglet recalled. "My single team was one of the Carlos Vigil Middle School teams that I'm currently mentoring again, and it originally had three team members."

But on the morning the team was leaving for the international event, Cainglet received an apologetic message from one of the parents, saying that their child would not be able to compete after all because, on second thought, the family could not afford the cost for the hotel and food.

"It was a real shame for the student and the team and underscores the need for additional fundraising," Cainglet said. "Yet the two students who did compete—one girl and one boy—ended up doing something quite miraculous. They placed second in their category, right after a highly competitive group from China."

There are things beyond winning, though, that Cainglet values even more. RoboRAVE participants have a chance to learn science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills while having a good time, and some even dream of STEM- or robotics-related careers.

RoboRAVE is one of several STEM competitions that Los Alamos National Laboratory sponsors or supports.

Janelle Vigil-Maestas of the Laboratory's Community Programs Office is impressed with how quickly the Northern New Mexico RoboRAVE Rally has grown. "Last year, 31 teams from across northern New Mexico participated at Northern New Mexico College in Española, which was a wonderful start," Vigil#Maestas said, "and this year an astounding 89 teams have signed up. It takes a whole year of effort to make the event a reality, but that's quickly forgotten when we see the students' excitement and smiles."

"Mr. Ian," the female middle school student who took second prize last year recently told Ian Cainglet, "I think I'll become a software engineer."

For details on the 2015 RoboRAVE events, including the Española rally, please consult the [RoboRAVE](#) website.

